



Ohio Mayors Alliance Opponent Testimony

HOUSE BILL 90

Ohio Senate Government Oversight and Reform

February 17, 2021

Chair Wiggam, Vice-Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, on behalf of the Ohio Mayors Alliance I would like to submit this testimony in opposition to House Bill 90. The Ohio Mayors Alliance is a bipartisan coalition of mayors in Ohio's largest urban and suburban communities. Our mission is to strengthen Ohio's cities and metropolitan regions through collaboration, communication, improved advocacy, and stronger partnerships with policymakers.

Local officials and our essential workers have been on the frontlines of the fight to contain this once-in-a-century pandemic. This has presented unprecedented challenges to policymakers and elected officials as we contend with the very serious health and economic consequences of the coronavirus. We know that the disruption and uncertainty that this virus has caused in both the public and private sector is immeasurable. We fear that House Bill 90 will only make things more uncertain and disruptive at the local government level.

To limit a health state of emergency to just 30 days would greatly impair local officials' ability to plan in an already uncertain and challenging moment. Several of the provisions that the General Assembly had the foresight to pass in House Bill 197 in March of last year have been incredibly helpful to our communities. These changes have provided local communities some sense of stability during the most unstable and disruptive year many have ever experienced. While few knew how long we would be dealing with this pandemic, it is hard to imagine how challenging it would have been to plan a local response under the monthly threat of significant state policy changes.

The Ohio Mayors Alliance understands the importance of establishing appropriate checks and balances between the executive and legislative branches on many functions of state government. Legislative oversight is something that should be a consistent part of our system of government. However, there is an important balance between the deliberative process of lawmaking and the urgent need for government to react quickly during a public health crisis or a similar emergency that threatens the lives of Ohioans.

The Ohio Mayors Alliance opposes legislation that creates additional uncertainty for local communities and challenges effective emergency response planning. Local leaders are not only tasked with implementing responses to crises in their communities, but also coordinating with relative state and local leaders on that response. Legislation like House Bill 90 could complicate effective responses and disrupt the coordination of responses to *any and all* public health crises throughout Ohio's communities.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the Ohio Mayors Alliance does not believe it is the right time to make significant long-term law changes that could complicate effective responses, or that could cause disruptions in the coordination of responses to this pandemic. In the meantime, we must keep our focus on responding to this pandemic and recovering from this incredibly damaging health and economic crisis. We urge a no vote on House Bill 90.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. McCarthy', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Keary McCarthy
Executive Director, Ohio Mayors Alliance